

socialist review

aotearoa / new zealand

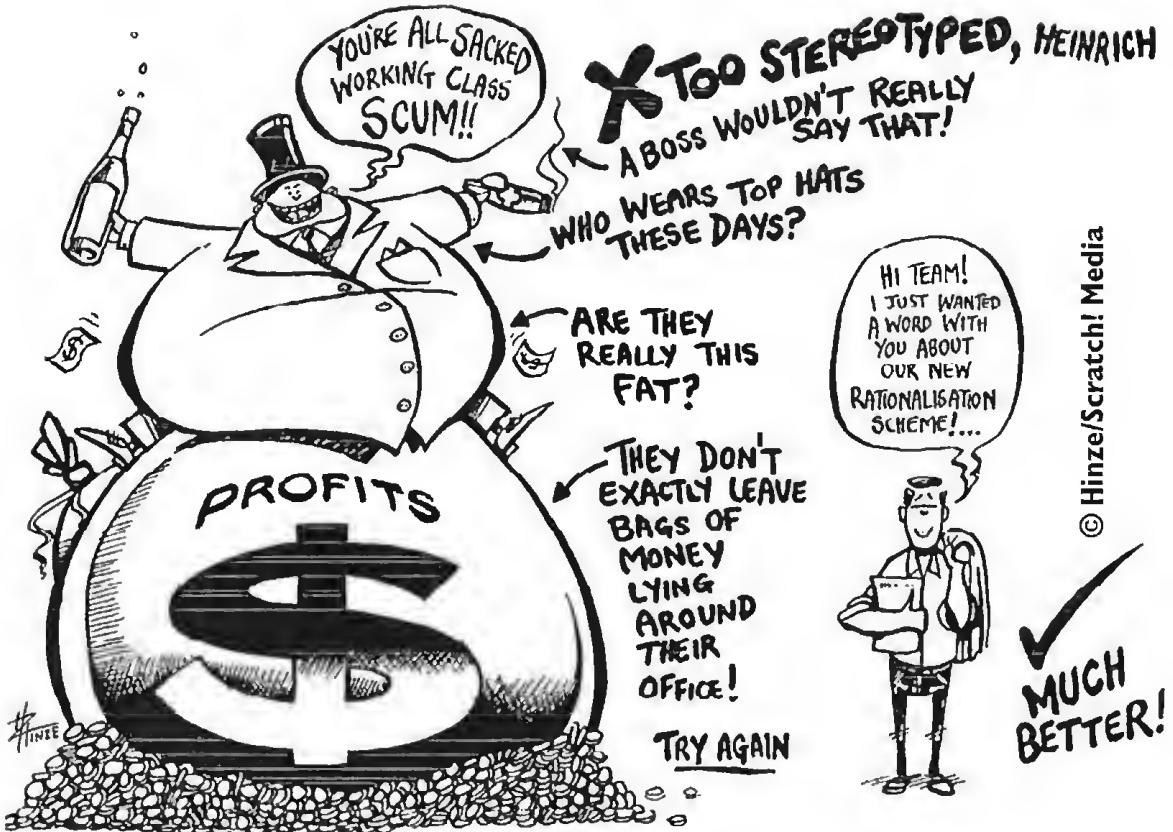
for a socialist & democratic alternative

issue 6 autumn 2001 \$2



which
side
are
you
on?

waterfront dispute • tino rangatiratanga • intellectual property • red words



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In the next Socialist Review...

Shaking down the bosses: Washington DC (pictured) was just one of dozens of militant anti-capitalist demonstrations around the world since Seattle. We report from the Melbourne M1 action and take a deeper look at the movement. On sale early winter. Don't miss your copy – to subscribe turn to page 23.





**Socialist
Review**

ISSN 1175-2629

Published by the International Socialist Organisation
P O Box 6157, Dunedin North, New Zealand
All subscription/distribution enquiries to P O Box 11207, Wellington, NZ
All email enquiries: isonz@hotmail.com
Website: www.isonz.homestead.com/sr.html



Getting on with business?

And suddenly, it all stopped. For more than half of last year the ruling class had been foaming at the mouth, wailing and gnashing its teeth, growling and glaring through designer sunglasses, prophesying imminent economic collapse. Things, those with power told us through their newspapers, television channels and radio programmes, were all Bad.

The Labour/Alliance Government was, according to Roger Kerr, similar to France's Communist/Socialist coalition of the early '80s; the world was about to end, the country had just entered a Great Leap Backwards. Brains were draining, markets crashing, business confidence – whatever this particularly vacuous term actually signifies – was in a slippery slope towards total despair, and our young people, those generations of promise, were fleeing in disgust.

But then, almost out of the blue, we heard no more about any of this. Despite the odd incompetent attempt at opposition from National, the Government in the last few months has had very few critics. Almost as quickly as the bile of reaction had been vomited, it stopped appearing. Why, after assuring us that the end was well and truly nigh, did the Right's business leaders shed their Millenarian suits and cease their prophesying?

First of all, some superficial explanations of this change of tune are helpful. The Right were wrong in almost every way about almost every thing. The economy hasn't collapsed; indeed, unemployment has fallen to a record low, the dollar has recovered and the Employment Relations Act hasn't – yet – led us back to the days of "union power". The ruling class also made a number of embarrassingly bad tactical mistakes – the whole "Brain Drain" campaign had neither evidence nor compelling arguments to back it, and stank so strongly of a botched and badly thought out plan to openly deceive the public and its own supporters that even the reptilian Paul Holmes was forced to distance himself from it. Having managed both prediction and description so badly, the ruling class has been forced to remain at least a little silent for a while.

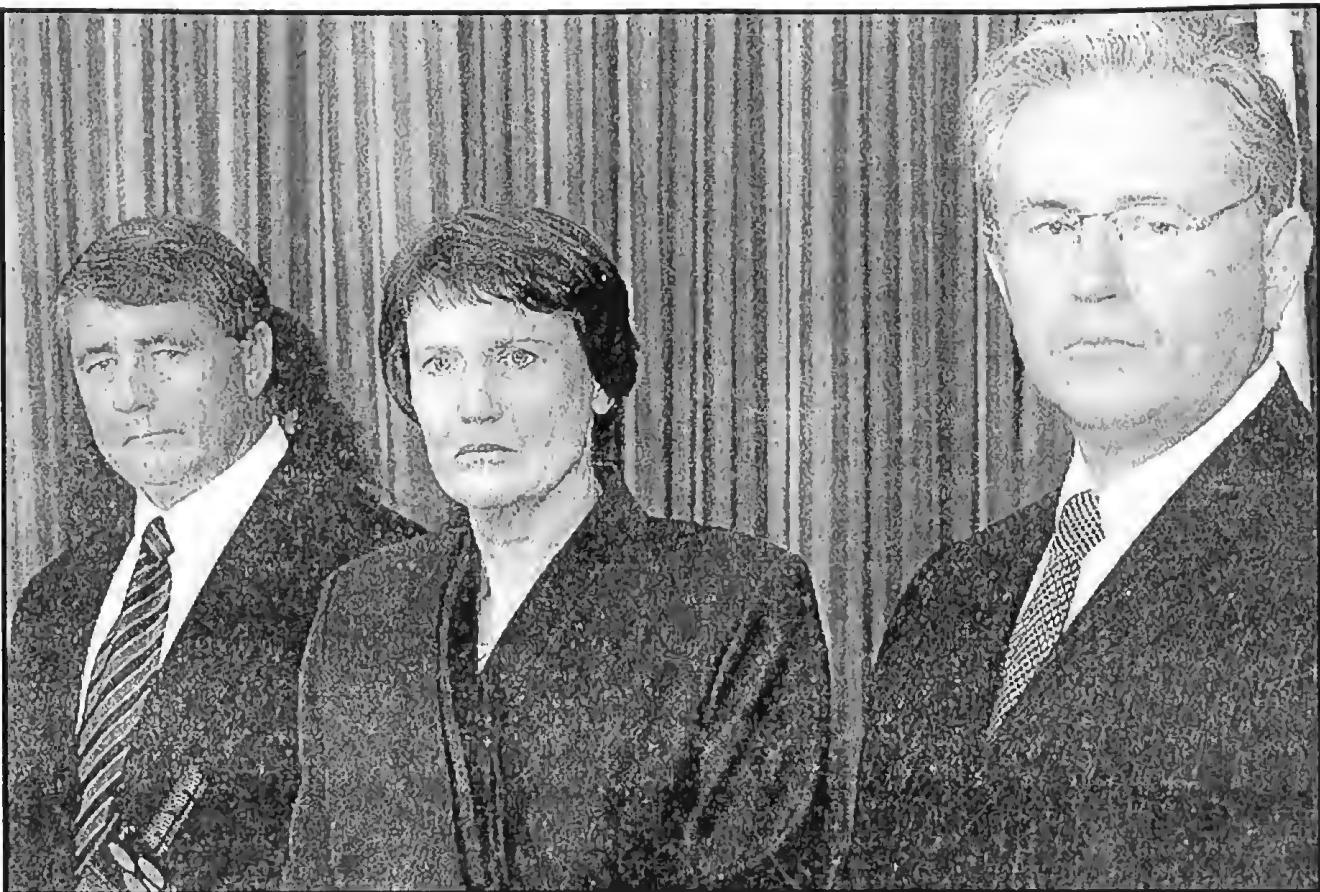
Another factor that goes some way towards explaining the change is the concern amongst many businesspeople that their attacks on the economy might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, if enough "important people" say that the dollar's worthless, our best and brightest are fleeing and the economy's in free-fall, these things tend to start happening.

But – and this is of far more worrying significance – the ruling class has even less reason to attack the Government than it did a year

ago. Labour has rushed to meet them not at the "middle of the road", but on the right lane. Helen Clark and Michael Cullen in 2000 both went on speaking tours their press secretaries openly described as "charm offensives in the business community".

The speaking tours – and the substance of the speeches given – are certainly offensive. Offensive to the working people who elected Labour to government. The ruling class have no longer any need to continue their hysterical attacks on the Coalition Government because the Coalition Government has gone out of its way to show these attacks are unnecessary – Labour has no intention of going against business interests.

The Council of Trade Unions has publicly stated that the new Employment Relations Act makes it harder for workers to take strike action than the old Contracts Act did. The new act allows fifteen people to call themselves a union. In other words, it encourages the formation of bosses' and scabs' unions. The Government's "good will" bargaining scheme suits Business precisely because it will have the power to ignore it and, when workers' rights need defending, the government will sit silent. Margaret Wilson in a statement recently parroted the lines of Carter Holt Harvey in the South Island waterfront dispute and



Anderton, Clark and Cullen: business-friendly?

called this a dispute between two unions! Workers could not fear worse from Max Bradford – the man who wanted to abolish Christmas – himself.

The ruling class have stopped their attacks on this Government for the simple reason that it is bad business sense to attack one's friends. Where has Labour been when Waterside Workers' Union wharfies have had their jobs stolen? Where has the government been whilst the vets have been subjected to a campaign of bullying and intimidation from employers and dairy farmers – their cheeks still rosy in the reflected glow of a \$70,000 bonus given them – furious at their demands for a pay increase? If Helen Clark or Michael Cullen have not been at business breakfasts, doubtless they have been too busy to even speak a single word of support for these workers.

Meanwhile, throughout all this, the Alliance has distinguished itself only in new depths of mediocrity. It is a sad waste to see a party that

has some of the country's best left-wing activists in its ranks reduced to political impotency, and to see this happen for what looks like only one major reason – the love Jim Anderton has for the feeling of his buttocks settled into a cabinet chair. Some Alliance MPs have shown integrity – Laila Harre's appearance at a Nelson watersiders' picket is a notable example of this – but, tied so closely as they are to a Labour Party determined to stick to its dirty history of talking left and walking right, these acts, motions and pieces of defeated legislation are restricted to being only moments of diversion in a policy of general agreement – down to breaking an election promise to students – with Labour.

The Labour/Alliance Government has been better than National was, but ask the question: what could be worse? After a year in power, it has become more obvious than ever that, without pressure for a tidal shift from below for real, substantive change, the ship of state will continue its listless rightward

drift. We have suffered more than sixteen years of attacks on our living conditions, health, welfare, education and even on our hopes. Māori have been disproportionately attacked by the cruel policies of these last decades, and even this Labour looks like it would rather deny.

There are still gaps that need to be closed, and this Helen Clark cannot wish away with the removal of a government phrase. But unless we force the government – of whatever party makeup that government might be – to make real changes, to improve the health and welfare systems, to seriously address the problem of student debt, to increase unemployment benefits and tax the rich, to pour money into Māori health, we will be condemned to a future of ever worsening inequality, poverty and despair. The power lies in us – in the working people of Aotearoa, not in the hands of the coalition policy makers. This is a fact that seems to have forgotten, but one we can – and must – remember again. ■

CRITICAL NOTES

Carter Holt Harvey - nasty in so many mays

Don't be fooled into thinking that Carter Holt Harvey's determination to put profit before safety is something they limit to the waterfront.

In Tokoroa late last year workers at Carter Holt's sawmill occupied their plant after the company rushed through unsafe shift changes.

Where once workers at the plant worked 3 eight-hour shifts, now CHH has removed the morning shift option, and now requires all its employees to work alternate afternoon and night shifts.

According to unionist David Leslie, "They say they need the days to carry out major upgrades, but these were finished months ago. And anyway, carrying out maintenance has never been a problem in the past".

In other words, CHH is using this as yet another opportunity to force workers to listen to their old message "forget about the change in government or the new legislation – no matter how hard you fight or how strong your union is, Big Business will still run the country".

...and more from the other side

Socialist Review recommends all its readers take out immediate subscriptions to the *Gore Ensign*, a paper that – despite its own best intentions – actually does "tell it like it is".

While most of the major cities' newspapers were rushing to put a positive spin on what was obvious police brutality at recent Bluff waterside pickets, the honest folks at the *Ensign* simply celebrated our boys in blue. Excerpts from their article below:

"The adrenalin was running..." one constable said yesterday, "...it's really good experience...we're out there to do a job – you can't take any of it to heart".

More tellingly, given recent police hysteria about underfunding, were the article's final paragraphs: *"Gore senior sergeant Barry Taylor said he was only too willing to juggle the rosters to assist where possible. Mr Taylor said the officers were keen to get some experience in a form of policing which they perhaps hadn't had before".* This is how they describe the chance to legally beat up workers!

Dubya's World

Some pearls of wisdom gleaned from sundry press statements, interviews and speeches by the man who

stole the White House, George Bush:

- "I know how hard it is for you to put food on your family".
- "It is clear our nation is reliant on big foreign oil. More and more of our imports come from overseas".
- "Families is where our nation finds hope, where wings take dream".
- "They want the government controlling Social Security like its some kind of federal programme".
- "They said, 'You know, this sure doesn't seem to resignate with the people'. And I said, "You know something? Whether it resignates or not doesn't matter to me, because I stand for doing what's the right thing, and the right thing is hearing the voices of the people who work)".

radicals in Korea are asking their president:

- What is so wonderful about your restructuring of our economy, causing job losses, mass unemployment, poverty, hopelessness and despair for the majority, and a major increase in profit and



President Kim

luxury for the bosses and the stooges of America?

• Why, when you've been given the Nobel Prize for Peace, did you order brutal crackdowns on protests against these unfair reforms? Why does your police force regularly use long batons, tear gas and bullets against peaceful protestors?

• And why, President Kim, do you break your own laws? The National Security Act you so zealously enforce allows you to imprison and torture us for trying to contact our families and loved ones in North Korea, and yet we've seen TV footage of you drinking champagne with their President Kim! And for this the West gives you a Nobel Prize? ■

Scumbag File: President Kim of South Korea

What is the surest sign that you're one of the worst war criminals, peace-hating, human rights-abusing scumbags on this earth? That's right – you get given the Nobel Prize for Peace! Just like Menachem Begin and others before him, Nobel Prize winner President Kim is far from the peace loving darling the capitalist media paint him as. **Chol-Ho Kim** provided *Socialist Review* with the following three points

CZECH TV STRIKE

At the end of last year, an inspiring struggle broke out for control of Czech TV, the main public broadcaster in the Czech Republic. Czech TV workers have led the struggle with massive support from the Czech people. Unlike previous struggles of the last 10 years, the workers have won significant victories and are confidently fighting for more.

The Velvet Revolution of 1989 overthrew the old Stalinist regime and led to expectations of a better life. Such expectations have run aground on rising unemployment, closed hospitals and schools, and a general economic malaise. Some 56% of people want the main political leaders thrown out – and, tragically, support for the former Stalinists has risen to 24 per cent, in the hope of better social policies.

An indication of the discontent was seen on 3 December 1999 when 80,000 marched in Prague for an end to the present coalition government. The protest convenors were quite conservative, limiting their demands merely to new elections and pleading futilely for socialists and anarchists not to attend the demonstrations.

Unionists too were independently active, with a 2,000-strong rally demanding unpaid factory wages, and the first occupation strike since the 1989 Velvet Revolution at the Kohinoor mine in Northern Bohemia.

The same discontent has led to pressures at Czech TV, culminating in the present struggle. Right-wing political interference and censorship of programme content has been an issue for a number of years.



When one of the leaders of the coalition government, Vaclav Klaus, faced tough questioning in a current affairs programme in 1998, the head of Czech TV News was sacked. There were further sackings more recently, when staff refused to read out a two-hour government political statement.

The government-appointed Czech TV council responded by appointing Jiri Hodac to general manager on 22 December. Hodac was expected to tame any left-wing ideas at Czech TV and to prepare it for privatisation.

Some 1400 staff immediately went on strike, demanding his resignation. Journalists began picketing Hodac-controlled news broadcasts, appearing behind the newsreaders in T-shirts emblazoned with political slogans.

Encouraged by massive popular support, the strikers began producing their own version of the news, playing it to daily

Strike – in the top left-hand corner.

There have been mass demonstrations in support. Some 100,000-200,000 rallied on 3 January, the biggest demonstration since the Velvet Revolution. A similar number marched on 11 January and further weekly demonstrations were planned. The slogan



"1968, 1989, 2001" – referring to heroic Czech struggles for freedom in the past – began to be taken up.

Finally the strike forced the resignation of Hodac on 11 January. Striking Czech TV workers then confidently upped their demands: the sacking of the entire management, along with the government-appointed council that oversees Czech TV.

In some ways the workers' demands are contradictory, being against both government control and privatisation. The only resolution is a TV council that is directly elected by the Czech people – and there are demands for such control already. These demands put the Czech government in an increasingly untenable position.

Some anarchists involved in the Prague S26 protests dismissed the Czech TV strike as a "power struggle between vested interests". Such an attitude is counter-productive. The logic of the Czech TV workers' struggle is towards democratisation of both the TV station and its programme content. This can only mean more positive coverage for actions like S26 in the future.

The success of the struggle so far has built confidence among the left in the Czech Republic generally. It has also opened up splits in the coalition government and exposed its fundamental weakness in the face of a united workers' struggle. We can only hope that such trends are built upon and spread. ■

Tony Martin



The biggest protests since 1989, above and top right, and blank TV screens mark further strike action, below

demonstrations of 5,000-10,000 on projectors outside the news studios – to the accompaniment of huge cheers or howls, depending on the content.

Czech TV workers occupied the news studios on 24 December, forced out security guards, and took over the transmitters after Czech telecommunications workers refused to transmit management's propaganda. The workers' news broadcasts appeared with a very uncorporate logo – the word

ON THE

As the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the 1951 Waterfront Lockout took place in February, hundreds of wharfies were again standing up to their bosses to try and stop casualisation.

In this special feature, **Tim Bowron** looks at the present dispute, while **Andrew Cooper** evaluates the events of 1951.

WATERFRONT



Police attack pickets at Bluff

Exactly fifty years ago the New Zealand waterfront was the scene of one of the most vicious attacks on the working class ever witnessed in this country. For 151 days the watersiders and their supporters struggled to remain united in the face of the entire repressive apparatus of the state. Baton-wielding police and soldiers drafted in from the army were used to escort scabs through the picket lines, while special "Emergency Regulations" were enacted making it illegal for anyone to give food or



This page Above: Picket at Port Chalmers / Below (2): Nelson
Opposite Top Right and Middle: Bluff / Bottom: Nelson

assistance to the watersiders and their families. The Waterfront Workers' Union, under the leadership of Jock Barnes the strongest, most militant and democratic union in New Zealand, was demonised by the press and its individual members branded as traitors. Fifty years on and the battle lines are being drawn once again as employers seek to "casualise" the waterfront once and for all.

When the Labour/Alliance Government was elected to office in November 1999 they promised to scrap the anti-union Employment Contracts Act and put in its place a new set of legislation based around the principle of "good faith bargaining". Yet far from strengthening the hand of the unions the new labour laws merely duplicate the same restrictions on strike activity contained in the ECA. Not only is the outright ban on sympathy strikes and the one-sided code of arbitration continued and consolidated, but in addition the coalition have bowed to pressure from the Business Roundtable by allowing the formation of "company" scab unions. It is this last provision under the terms of the new Employment Relations Act that has lead directly to the rise of Greg Dickson and his Amalgamated Stevedores Union, a scab union whose officials are all paid



employees of Tauranga-based International Stevedoring.

Since last November Carter Holt Harvey have been flying in these scabs from the North Island to load logs at Bluff, Port Chalmers and Nelson, depriving watersiders of their livelihoods and threatening the survival of working class communities already devastated by 16 years of job losses and economic rationalisation. Carter Holt's claims that the decision to hire Mainland Stevedoring is due to nothing more than a

desire to take advantage of their "highly skilled" operators and advanced "systems" is a complete fiction (Mainland's parent company has an appalling health and safety record and has been found indirectly responsible for the death of at least one of its own employees).

The real reason is that they believe, and with good reason, that by destroying the watersiders' union and using casual labour they will be able to drive down wages and conditions and ultimately make higher profits. But it is worth remembering too that increased profits for the owners and shareholders of Carter Holt Harvey are only possible by casualising jobs, destroying the collective power of the unions and creating greater unemployment. The dispute is about more profits that we will never see, and job losses and poverty that the bosses will never experience.

The media's portrayal of the current dispute as being nothing more than a "turf war" between rival unions shows the extent to which it has become a willing accessory in Carter Holt Harvey's campaign of lies and misinformation. Pickets organised by the Waterfront Workers' Union have been routinely characterised as "violent" and "disruptive" and yet for all that support for the watersiders is growing! In the



three months since the first pickets at Port Chalmers and Bluff we have seen local communities turn out in force at ports all around the South Island (and even some Carters retail outlets as well), determined to resist plans for the further casualisation of the New Zealand workforce.

If Carters hoped that these people would simply go away then recent events will have served to convince them otherwise – in fact, such is the growing anxiety with which they view these developments that they feel the need to take out full page newspaper advertisements denouncing the “intimidatory tactics” of the protesters. However, victory is still a long way off in this battle that displays no sign of letting up. Carters is in this for the long haul and will be prepared to carry on its campaign at a loss for a year or more because it knows that if it can break the

union it will be in a position to dictate wages and conditions.

The watersiders themselves are keenly aware that their only chance lies in preventing the scab labour from gaining entry onto the wharves, and indeed on every occasion that they have crossed the picket line the Mainland vehicles have not escaped unscathed. Unfortunately the longer the union leaders



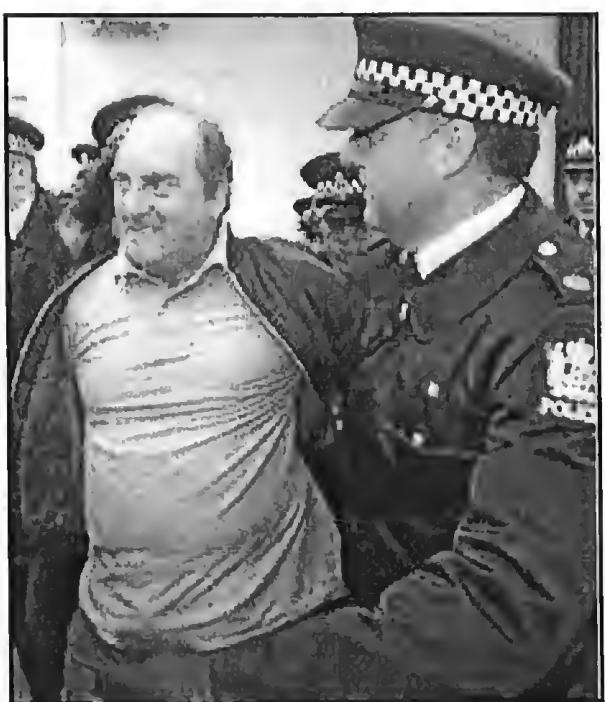
refuse to allow their own members to take any kind of action the more frustration and anger will lead to scuffles and assaults on the vans. This is a high-risk strategy that has already resulted in many injuries and arrests. In the absence of any real leadership the enormous potential of this movement is in danger of being lost.

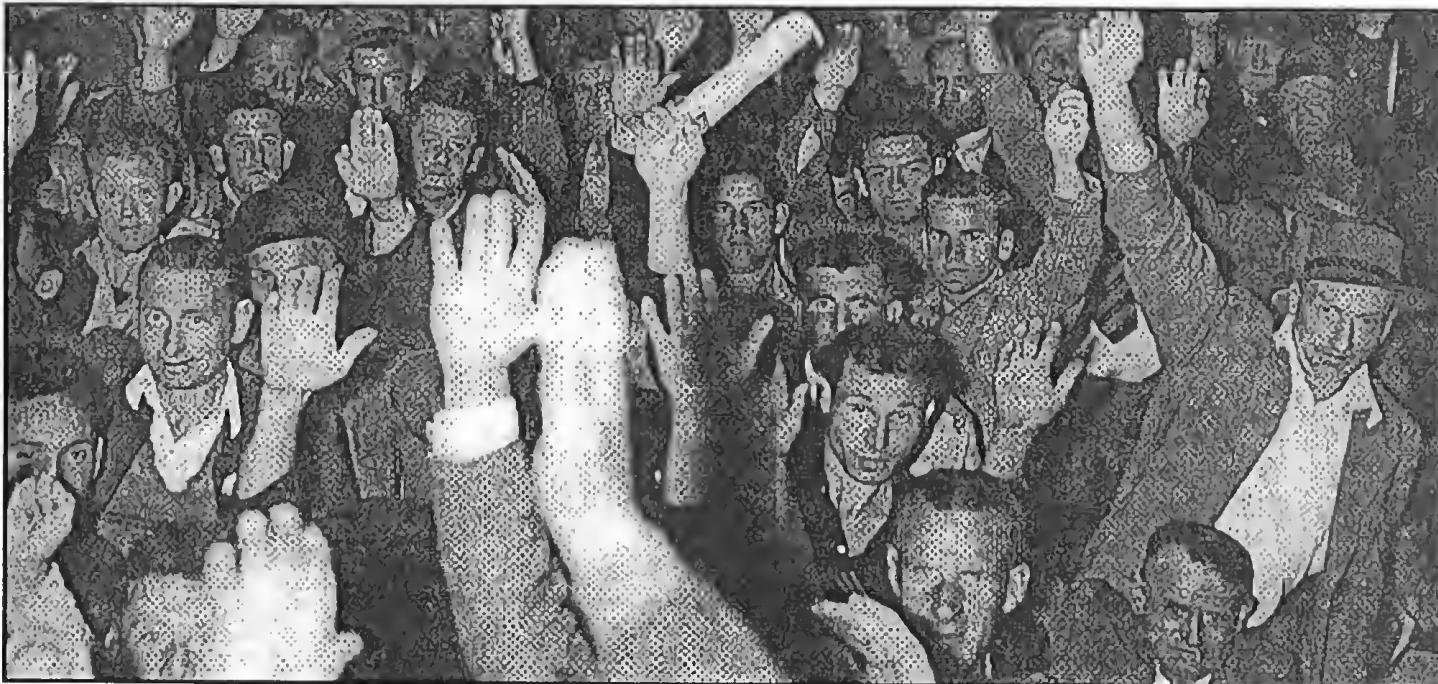
The role of socialists in agitating to put pressure on elected officials and making the arguments for direct, non-violent action is

therefore fundamentally important. Standing on the picket line in Bluff in January we were able for the first time to observe members of the rank-and-file arguing against and then actively defying a call by their president to allow the removal of one of their co-workers who had been arrested. We also had the satisfaction of forcing the same union official to

justify his refusal to countenance a peaceful blockade (if we sat down we would apparently be trampled to death by the police “flying wedge”).

In the event the small group of us who did sit down managed to break up the police formation without anyone being arrested or seriously injured. It is precisely this kind of unconditional but critical support that is needed if we are to set about building a campaign capable of resisting attacks by the bosses. The experience of the MUA in Australia tells us that this dispute will not be won by cheering from the sidelines, instead it is a matter of us all becoming directly involved in the struggle. ■





**This page Wellington wharfies vote to continue action
Opposite Hysterical headlines from British and Australian papers**

Introduction

Fifty years ago tens of thousands of NZ workers were taking part in the largest and most significant industrial struggle ever seen in this country. The "151 Days" saw the Draconian "Emergency Regulations" put into effect to smash the Waterside Workers' Union (WWU), regulations the NZ Standard was to call the most "drastic curtailment of the right of free speech... enforced in any country outside of fascist nations".

In this article we look at the origins of the 151 Days, the momentous events of that year, and what lessons the defeat holds for those struggling for many of the same basic rights the wharfies fought for fifty years ago.

The struggle for control of the wharves

The events of 1951 had their origins in two different conflicts. One was a struggle for control of work on the waterfront between wharfies on one side and the shipping and port companies on the other. The second was a much wider struggle between the WWU, as leaders of NZ's most politically advanced workers, and the Cold War logic of both Labour and National's "anti-Communist" politics.

First though, let's look at the struggle on the wharves.

Throughout the 1920s and '30s conditions on the wharves could only be described as appalling. In those days, before modern container shipping, goods were stored in various cheap packagings, often paper bags in the case of some of the most "obnoxious cargoes" like fertiliser

and "lampblack" – a filthy substance used to blacken tyres. These packages often broke, exposing workers to their contents. Further, the NZ wharves were notorious for their lack of mechanisation. Workers had to haul cargo around with their own hands rather than using cranes and other labour-saving equipment.

This complete disregard for workers' safety meant that at times fully one third of all waterside workers were receiving accident compensation at some point during the year.

But this was by no means the only bad thing about the wharves. Throughout this period the auction block system (basically a form of casual labour) meant that wharfies often had to wait around all day to see if they would get work. They often didn't, and weren't paid if there wasn't work on a particular day.

The port companies and shipowners were determined to wring every last penny of profit, with little regard for the safety or welfare of their workers. And just like today, despite significant improvements in productivity by the workers, all that was ever heard from the bosses was that standards were slipping, pilferage was rampant, and that discipline needed to be restored to the waterfront.

The wharfies reacted to these harsh, dangerous work conditions both by organising as a union, and through developing practices such as "spelling" which aimed to ease the burden on wharfies by the rapid

rotation of workers on duty. These actions were the response of wharfies to the extremely hard conditions they faced, not because they were "lazy" or more interested in subversive political meetings than doing their jobs, as the bosses claimed.

The wharfies won a series of important improvements in their working conditions such as control of employment, whether to work overtime and payment for handling obnoxious cargoes. The Second World War saw a massive shake-up on the wharves as there was not only a huge increase in the amount of goods being shipped, but the arrival of the US military saw modern equipment and procedures introduced. From the auction block and short hours the wharfies now typically worked fifty hours or more a week during the 1940s boom.

The other big conflict was a much wider one. It saw the militant unions around the WWU face off against the right-wing of the labour movement and the ruling class. It was a Cold War conflict between unionists who wanted to defend and improve workers' lives and those who wanted to smash any labour unrest in the drive for postwar "stability".

The WWU

Both during the earlier years and now under the extraordinary leadership of its president Jock Barnes, the Waterside Workers' Union was at the centre of industrial struggle in NZ. They became such a militant group of workers because of the unity forged around continuous battles with the bosses. Conditions were similar for workers at all ports and awards were bargained nationally, and the ports themselves were tightly-knit working class communities.

These things – their actual work conditions and the closeness of their communities – meant that the wharfies were an extremely united and disciplined group of workers. In the face of unrelenting attacks by the right-wing union leaders and the bosses, they built up a

tremendous reputation for solidarity with other workers. The WWU campaigned around numerous issues, and its paper, *Transport Worker*, educated its readers in working class history as well as informing them of current struggles.

By gaining control of the hiring of labour,



good "industrial character" became the primary requirement for a job on the wharves, and many militants blacklisted from work elsewhere were given jobs and added to the WWU's fighting spirit.

Origins of the lockout

By the late '40s the ruling class was becoming

lining up loyally behind them was the Federation of Labour (FOL), under the increasing domination of one Fintan Patrick Walsh, possibly the most despicable labour "leader" in this country's history. By 1950 Walsh and his cronies had successfully manoeuvred the WWU and several other militant unions into seceding from the FOL to form the separate Trade Union Congress (TUC). The formation of the TUC was not some act of machismo or ultrasectarianism on the part of Barnes and his allies, as is sometimes claimed. In reality they had no choice except to form a new union grouping or surrender completely to the right wing.

The differences between the militant TUC and the conservative FOL weren't just the by-products of Barnes and Walsh's personalities, as completely opposite as they were. Far more important were the underlying differences in the membership of the two confederations. The FOL relied heavily on very passive groups of union members, such as civil servants, who, because of compulsory union membership

gave an apparently huge (but illusory) support base for Walsh. In reality this "support" was the result of a passive voting block



increasingly determined to smash the WWU, which they correctly saw as an inspiration to workers throughout the country. First the Labour Party under Prime Minister Peter Fraser, then National under Holland, sought to impose "labour discipline" as part of the Cold War drive, for example by destroying the militant carpenters' union in 1949.

of clerical and shop assistant unions.

In complete contrast, the TUC unions, especially the watersiders, were extremely democratic. Barnes had to fight very hard to get and then keep his position as president, and, unlike the wealthy F.P. Walsh, earned less

continued over...

than many of his members when he became a paid official.

WWU meetings were attended by thousands of workers, and Barnes and the other leaders had to openly argue for their ideas in front of mass meetings of their members, rather than making backroom deals with the bosses. It was, above all, a union that was controlled by its members.

151 Days

By 1950 conflict had become inevitable: the bosses and the Government were determined to smash the wharfies, and the WWU was not prepared to lie down and play dead, as the FOL would have preferred.

At the end of January 1951 the Arbitration Court ordered a general wage rise of 15%. But the shipowners refused to pass this on to the wharfies. The WWU announced an overtime ban and were immediately locked out. The 151 Days had begun.

The story of the February-July lockout is really two stories. One is a story of inspiring solidarity, where the wharfies long history of supporting other workers paid handsome dividends in the form of solidarity strikes, particularly by coal miners, and of incredible bravery in the face of unrelenting slander. Even today, in an era of defeats where the idea of workers actually winning a significant victory seems almost otherworldly, these events still serve to inspire.

But the other story is that of the bosses, their Government and their allies in the FOL who were prepared to use virtually unlimited repressive measures to win.

Just days after the lockout began, the

Government invoked the infamous Emergency Regulations. To all intents and purposes free speech was abolished. It became a crime to support the wharfies in any way – by encouraging workers to take action or just giving food to their families. The newspapers weren't allowed to print any statement by the

leaders were savaged as traitors, Soviet agents and economic wreckers. Incredible (and often laughable) propaganda stories were spread. Men who had only a few years before fought in the Second World War were now labelled "the enemy within" by Holland.

The war on the WWU makes Carter Holt

Harvey's current ad campaign against the wharfies look like a picnic. One Auckland paper even called on the police to shoot workers if they tried to march.

This was part of a much wider campaign of vilification stretching back

many years. Any young student sitting School Certificate English in the late '40s would have found the following question on their exam papers:

"Write a letter to one of the daily papers exposing the evils of the spelling system practised by the NZ waterside workers, or drawing attention to any other evils."

The wharfies were well organised and confident, with every branch setting up lockout committees to coordinate picketing, advertising and relief work.

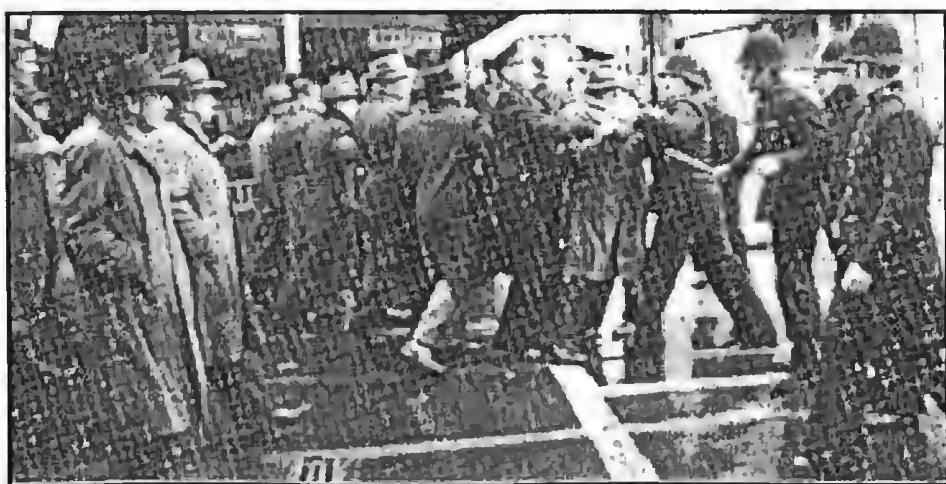
In April the WWU accepted the Government's "Seven Points" for a settlement, so naturally Holland immediately

added an eighth! – requiring the national union to be broken up into a number of smaller unions in each port. The bosses' real aim – to utterly smash the WWU – was now abundantly clear.

The dispute dragged on into July, when, with other unions forced back to work by hunger



**This page Demonstrations in Auckland (above) and Wellington
Opposite Jock Barnes /
National Party 1951 Election
Poster**



WWU, even if they had been so inclined.

The press, which had never been particularly restrained when it came to attacking the wharfies, now had a field day. Unable to answer back except through a small illegal printing operation, the wharfies and their

and intimidation, the wharfies finally gave in. Their union was destroyed, and Barnes and many ordinary wharfies were blacklisted. More importantly, it was a devastating blow to all NZ workers, who now faced a much more confident ruling class and a union movement at the mercy of the FOL.

Was defeat inevitable?

Firstly, despite their harshness, the Government's victory was not just a result of the Emergency Regulations. In reality these sorts of measures are only as powerful as the state's ability to enforce them. Far harsher regimes, like South Africa, have been defeated by workers despite terrible repression.

Most academic historians are highly critical of the wharfies' decision to stand firm in '51. Barnes is often portrayed as being primarily motivated by a desire for revenge against the FOL and the Government, and the usual view expressed is that no group of workers can successfully fight a government and employers determined to win.

Firstly, Barnes had overwhelming support from his members during the lockout. Indeed, only a tiny handful of the thousands of watersiders scabbed during the dispute.

And what if workers followed the logic of the second argument – the idea that we should never try and fight because we're bound to lose? This isn't just an academic point – it was the exact conclusion given by Ken Douglas, the national union leader at the time the ECA was passed in 1991, as to what lessons the union movement could draw from '51. Apart from the fact that it simply isn't true

(thank goodness no one told black South Africans that they were bound to fail fighting apartheid), can anyone not enjoying a senior union position seriously argue that NZ workers are better off now because the CTU did stuff all to fight the Contracts Act?



Conclusion

The short term result, on the wharves at least, was the destruction of the WWU and with it the militant leadership of the union movement. But because the struggles of the wharfies were a reaction to the harsh nature of waterfront work and their ability to organise easily, within a few years the part bosses were again complaining about lazy workers and inefficient practices.

Further, in the years ahead, former waterfront leaders found work in a number of different industries, often coming to the fore in the great struggles of the late '60s and '70s.

And whether the enemy was the P&O Shipping Line and the Waterfront Commission then, or Carter Holt Harvey and the Employers' Federation today, wharfies have always been in the forefront of the struggle.

Above all 1951 proves that solidarity,

militancy and struggle are the real traditions of the union movement, not miserable "compromises" and sellouts. Because in fighting

back we remind the bosses that they can't just trample all over us if we stand firm. Even if we are defeated, we give the enemy pause to think next time it attacks.

As Jock Barnes put it a year after the 1951 defeat:

"The working class of NZ can thank those who fought last year for the conditions they still enjoy... While thousands of workers, their wives and children, suffered dearly, money power took some mighty blows. The boss is always the workers' greatest organiser and last year he educated tens of thousands of workers in the fundamentals of capitalist economy".

Perhaps the greatest tribute to those who fought in '51 though, is not any book or speech, but a simple four word line printed in deepest red on the certificates given to all those who participated throughout the struggle:

"Stood loyal right through"



An exhibition of newspaper coverage, films, and lectures on the events: "1951: Lock-Out, Strikes, Confrontation" is currently on at The Film Centre, cnr. Cable St. & Jervois Quay, Wellington, until 20 May. Admission free. ■

The struggle for tino rangatiratanga and socialism

Marxism is not a set of rigid doctrines but a living, dynamic way of interpreting, understanding and most importantly changing the world around us. Many aspects of politics and culture have been extensively discussed by Marxists over the years but others remain unresolved and little-debated.

The question of tino rangatiratanga is one that is often misunderstood and dealt with superficially by both racists and anti-racists alike. In what we hope will be the opening shot in a series of articles debating this important question, Andrew Tait outlines some of the issues.

Round One: Pre 1840

Before 1840 Aotearoa had easily swallowed and digested the sailors, whalers, ex-convicts and traders who landed on her shores. These fugitives generally blended in with Māori society, bringing with them trade and useful skills. Soon Māori trading vessels plied the Tasman Sea.

Round Two: The Treaty of Waitangi

This peace was not to be. Instead, Māori chiefs and the British ambassador, Hobson, signed a treaty in 1840. It was a logical step for Māori, who had so far seen mainly good results come from interaction.

For the British it was not only logical, it was great – in return for acknowledging Māori ownership (or tino rangatiratanga) of their land and taonga they were granted governorship (kawanatanga). It was a windfall for the British because, at this stage, they were completely unable to challenge Māori tino rangatiratanga. The mightiest empire in the world was unable to project its power everywhere at once.

Capitalism, the economic system which fuelled the explosion of British might and power, was entering into its first major crisis.

This recession was like all the recessions which have followed it, not

caused by drought or flooding or any other natural disaster but rather the result of overproduction. The economy as a whole had produced more than enough goods, and the millions of people who worked in mines, farms and factories did not need to work any more.

What should have been a cause for great happiness was actually the worst disaster this relatively new system had faced, because the people who controlled the economy could no longer make any profits. So millions who had produced the surplus were made redundant, and the British Empire in the 1840s was facing a crisis, while back home the "Chartists" demanded a fairer share of the wealth for those who produced it as well as greater democracy.

So, because of all this, Queen Vicky was in no position to grab Aotearoa off Māori. Instead she sent Hobson with his pieces of paper.

Round Three: WAR!

Unemployed workers and Hobson's treaty may at first seem unrelated, and they were, until some bright spark in the British gentry hit on the idea of solving unemployment at home by exporting "surplus population" (i.e. poor people). Aotearoa became reinvented by the nineteenth century's Saatchi & Saatchi as "New Zealand", a land of milk and honey. English, Irish and Scottish "boat people" flooded the ports of New Zealand, hoping for a fresh start.

The South Island had already been bought at bargain basement prices (34 million acres of Ngai Tahu land at 0.006 pence per acre!) and carved up by the billionaires of the time. The only land available to the recent arrivals was still occupied by Māori.

The result was decades of warfare across the length and breadth of the North Island. Led by chiefs like Maniopoto, Titokowaru, Te Ua Haumene and Te Kooti, Māori put up a fierce resistance to the British land grab. But Māori were also divided among themselves, with some "kupapa" or "loyalist" Māori supporting the British.

The military conflict ended with

massive confiscations of tribal land from the "rebels", but also from the tribes who had fought alongside the British.

Round Four: The legal assault

After crushing military resistance the government passed laws to try and break up tribal land and to dispossess Māori. An important law was the Native Lands Act, which broke up the collective title of Māori land.

Henry Sewell, the first premier of New Zealand, explained its two-fold purpose: firstly, to bring the bulk of land within the reach of European colonisation, and, secondly, to achieve "the detribalisation of the natives - to destroy if it were possible, the principle of communism which runs through the whole of their institutions".

As if this wasn't enough, in 1875 Chief Justice Prendergast declared that the Treaty of Waitangi was legally null and void. It stayed that way legally for 100 years.

In the early 1900s, European rulers smugly told themselves that they were watching the twilight of the "Māori race", outclassed in some sort of evolutionary struggle.

Round Five: Survival

The Māori "race" was in fact far from dead. The New Zealand government responded with the Hunn Report, released in 1960. It rejected the official policy of assimilation, proposing instead the "integration" of the best of two cultures (Māori and Pākehā). Because policy prescriptions promoted strategies strictly in educational terms, integration was essentially to be integration for Māori into a capitalist society which reflected the material interests of a ruling class that at this stage was dominated by Pākehā. So the reality for most Māori was that there was very little difference between the policies of assimilation and integration.

But this challenge was met by a new generation of activists like Nga Tamatoa, who revived the old claim to tino rangatiratanga. In the cities and the country of New Zealand, Aotearoa raised her standard, marching on

Parliament demanding land, and occupying stolen lands such as Bastion Point and Raglan.

In 1975 Prime Minister Muldoon was forced to undo Prendergast's decision and once more acknowledge the Treaty officially. He set up the Waitangi Tribunal, but it was a toothless body, unable to hear claims from before 1975.

In 1981 Māori resistance to colonisation in New Zealand was joined with Pakeha resistance to support the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Hundreds of thousands protested racism in South Africa, and woke up to the facts of racism in New Zealand.

In 1984, a Labour Government was elected, and they increased the power of the Waitangi Tribunal, opening it to hear claims from before 1975. Labour's strategy was to try and steer Māori radicals into fighting along "legal" lines where they were weakest and the state was at its strongest.

At the same time, Labour embarked on its New Right restructuring of the economy which was continued by the National and Coalition Governments. Most workers, both Māori and Pākehā, suffered a fall in incomes as unions were attacked and jobs were lost.

Many of the activists who had opposed the state were now tied up with red tape by the Waitangi Tribunal, as the ruling class and Labour had hoped, and some openly embraced the new culture of greed for the elite (a.k.a. belt-tightening for everyone else). Big names in this new plastic Aotearoa, like Robert Mahuta of Tainui-Corp and Tipene O'Regan, earned big perks and bigger bucks, while the vast majority of Māori are worse off than ten years ago.

The Treaty settlements that have been made are paraded as triumphs for justice by the Government and the media. Nobody points out how these settlements are tiny compared with what the Crown owes under the Treaty, and no-one points out that the benefits stay with the new rich Māori leaders.

The settlements tend to play into the hands of parties like ACT who fuel racism by their crass slogan "Full fair

and final settlements".

Round Six: Socialism: Aotearoa's prize-winning K.O. blow?

At the same time as the British army fought in Aotearoa to chuck Māori off their land, they were fighting to evict the Scottish Highlanders and replace them with sheep. As new foreign diseases ravaged Aotearoa, a famine made worse by British occupation ravaged Ireland.

Also, while the Māori sovereignty movement was at its strongest, in the 1970s and early '80s, the union movement was also at its peak. The New Right economic reforms have hurt both Pākehā and Māori workers. Most people in Aotearoa/New Zealand are worse off now than they were a decade ago.

This just shows that the rhetoric of racism is nothing but myth and slander. So long as nations war against nations, their rulers reap the benefits.

Socialism is about cooperation. It means fighting for all working people, Māori and Pākehā, against the things which oppress all of us - this undemocratic and alienating, depressing system which places profit above any sort of human consideration.

For Pākehā, tino rangatiratanga is nothing to fear or fight against. The idea that Māori will "steal" all of "our" land is just stupid and alarmist. Most of us don't actually own vast tracts of land, the bosses who control our lives do. Reconciliation won't come about through flashy Waitangi celebrations, it'll come when concrete justice is delivered to the majority of Māori.

This can't happen in a system where a small group of wealthy people control the rest of us. It matters little if this elite is Pākehā or Māori - for the vast majority of Māori no sort of self-determination would exist. Real tino rangatiratanga can occur only in a socialist society. A socialist society in Aotearoa would be socialist in name only unless it recognised and developed tino rangatiratanga.

Ka whawhai tonu matou, ake ake ake! ■

Who was... Leon Trotsky?

Evan Poata-Smith looks at Leon Trotsky's remarkable contribution to the socialist tradition

Leon Trotsky was born in 1879 and became a revolutionary whilst still a teenager. By the age of just 26 he was Chairperson of the Petrograd Soviet, or workers' council, during the 1905 revolution. He became the most important leader, after Lenin, of the 1917 revolution, and organised and led the Red Army against enormous odds to victory over the armies of two dozen imperial powers in the Civil War.

Perhaps his most enduring legacy today, apart from his theoretical innovations and practical leadership, is that during the terrible decades of the 1920s and 1930s when Stalin was committing barbarous crimes in the name of "socialism", and the brutal Nazi regime was committing atrocities in Germany, Leon Trotsky kept alive the tradition of socialism from below.

The working class movement has many martyrs, but Trotsky's position is unique. As Tony Cliff puts it, Trotsky "...was murdered not once but time and time again". His entire family, then thousands of supporters, all fell victim to Stalin's murderous regime.

The Stalinist counter-revolution had destroyed socialism's democratic essence and established the most vicious mechanism of exploitation in order to accumulate capital. A new bureaucratic ruling class was to oversee the

transformation of a poor and backward country into a modern power, whatever the cost in human terms. That such a perspective could be called "socialist" was a horrendous infamy. Against this background Trotsky's dissenting voice was a cry in the wilderness.

Throughout the 1920s until his death at the hands of a Stalinist agent in 1940, Trotsky fought desperately to try and build a revolutionary socialist movement based on the principles of Marx and Lenin. At a time when Stalin's counter-revolution was reshaping Russia and the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini was sweeping across Europe, crushing workers' movements in its path, this was no mean task.

Internationalism

Against the nationalistic notion of "socialism in one country" Trotsky asserted that socialism could only come into being on a world scale. "The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable... Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent one in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our planet... It is a reactionary, narrow dream, to try and achieve 'socialism in one country'". In this Trotsky defended the uncompromising internationalism of Marx, Luxemburg and Lenin.



Portrait of Trotsky during the Russian Civil War

It was Trotsky's great virtue to insist against all odds that socialism was rooted in the struggle for human freedom.

United Front

Trotsky provided a brilliant and original analysis of Nazism. With increasing urgency, he warned of the catastrophe which would follow the rise of the Nazis. A catastrophe which would

threaten not only the German, but also the international working class. He repeatedly called for a united front of all labour movements and organisations to crush the fascists.

Stalin did everything to sabotage efforts to build a united front under fascism. Indeed, under Stalinist manipulation, Communist Parties all over Europe were instructed to reject any united front with Social Democrats (the equivalent in those days to Aotearoa's Labour and Alliance parties) against fascism. Social Democracy, dubbed "social fascism", was declared the main enemy, not the Nazis.

Tragically Trotsky's prophetic warnings and urgent calls were not heeded. If his analysis and proposals for action had been accepted it is almost certain that the Nazis would have been defeated.

Even if he had never developed the theory of permanent revolution, never played a leading role in the revolution of 1917, nor built the Red Army, Trotsky's contribution to keeping alive the socialist flame during the 1930s would have ensured him a place in the history of international socialism.

Trotsky claimed that, even during 1917 when he personally played a leading role second only to Lenin, his contribution to the socialist tradition was not indispensable.

But during the 1930s his contribution was absolutely indispensable. Trotsky battled against incredible odds to keep the real Marxist tradition of Marx and Engels, Luxemburg and Lenin, alive through an era dominated by Stalinism in the East and fascism in the West.

Permanent Revolution

Trotsky's greatest and most original contribution to Marxism was his theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky developed this theory at a time when practically all Marxists believed that socialist revolution was possible only in advanced industrial countries.

Russia's backwardness and belated development meant that it had entered the twentieth century without shaking off the middle ages, without passing through the stages that the West had already passed, like the Reformation and the bourgeois revolution, (for instance, England in the 1660s or the French Revolution). It was widely believed that in order to establish workers' power in backward countries such as Russia, they would have to experience exactly the same historical and technological developments that had already occurred in advanced countries. This meant that any revolutionary change in Russia would have to pass through a lengthy stage of "bourgeois" or liberal democracy, like Britain or France.

Trotsky rejected the view that Russia would have to conform to strict stages of development before the working class would be mature enough to pose the question of socialist revolution. He argued that backward countries would be forced to skip a whole series of intermediate stages. In other words, backward countries would not take things in the same order. As Trotsky put it: "savages throw away their bows and arrows for rifles at once, without travelling the road which lay between these two weapons in the past."

Class Struggle

Thus a socialist revolution in Russia did

not depend directly upon the state or on the productive forces, but upon the conditions of the class struggle, upon the international situation, and upon a series of subjective factors – tradition, initiative, readiness for struggle.

Trotsky argued that the bourgeoisie would be incapable of providing a consistent, democratic revolutionary solution to the problem posed by feudalism and imperialism. In this way, a consistent solution to Russia's problems would necessitate moving beyond the bounds of bourgeois private property. As he put it "the democratic revolution grows over immediately into the socialist, and thereby becomes a permanent revolution".

The 1917 Revolution in Russia proved all of Trotsky's assumptions right.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, during the 1930s, because of his isolation from the great workers' movements, Trotsky committed a serious theoretical error. Believing that Russia's nationalised economy represented a lasting gain from the revolution, he declared the USSR to be a "degenerated" workers' state. This position would cause enormous confusion amongst many revolutionary socialists in the years to come.

But there is no need to dwell on this mistake. Today, as we face the same terrifying realities of capitalism Trotsky described and analysed seventy years ago, his writings and deeds still provide a basis for building a democratic alternative to that system. ■

intellectual property & capitalism

A recurring theme in the media coverage of the Internet and related technologies is the control of information, in terms of both policing the content of the Internet, and the complexities of protecting intellectual property rights in such a vast and intangible environment. One particular point that has been raised time and time again is the practical application of intellectual property law to material on the Internet, as it brings up the contentious issue of what constitutes "publication".

As we have seen in the legal battles so far, intellectual property has been defended by big business for obvious reasons: the protection of intellectual property rights means protection of profits, which would otherwise be undermined in the process of unlimited duplication and distribution of material that has some worth to the capitalist in terms of exchange value in the market – the most recent example being the case of Napster and the free downloading of MP3 music files off the Internet, fought against by representatives of the recording industry.

It is clear that intellectual property is a topical issue at the moment, partly attributable to the complexities it faces in the light of the "information economy". More to the point though, innovation, invention and intellectual property are directly linked to the development of capitalism, the productive forces governing it, and the resulting class structure. The purpose of this article is to briefly examine some of the key points about intellectual property as a feature of capitalist society, the ideology surrounding it, and the impact on class consciousness.

Intellectual property and capitalism

One of the most celebrated characteristics of capitalism by its proponents is its overwhelming and unprecedented capacity to make technological advancements and to constantly reinvent itself, which, they claim, leads to an increased material standard of living over time. Innovation is the key to winning the profit-making game: the goal for a capitalist is to seek competitive advantage, or monopolistic conditions over other competitors in the industry. In production, this results in the constant battle against workers to increase productivity without increasing wages.

Technological improvements play an important role in this process, as the mechanisation of production meets this end, hence, research into improved production methods is an important step in the process of wrestling for profits, and high on the list of investment priorities of firms. Innovation in product design has a similar role in securing a monopolistic position in the market.

Mainstream economists explain this as the first stage in the "product lifecycle". In the early stages of a product's life as a commodity, it will command "premium earning capacity", i.e., market conditions are experienced which are highly favourable to the seller, including a high degree of price setting ability, therefore profitability is enhanced. For both innovation in production methods and product innovation, the early stages of an innovation's commercial application are its most profitable, but they are also the stages at which costs are highest. This is where intellectual property works to protect the efforts of the creator.

Intellectual property (patents, trademark and design registration, and copyright) provide a period of guaranteed monopoly to the innovator, ensuring that the early stages of an innovation's commercial application are made a little less risky. In this sense, intellectual property has a crucial function in stimulating inventive activity by ensuring its profitability.

Intellectual property and ideology

In a capitalist society, property rights play a central role in legitimising the outcome that a minority group of capitalists gain a profit, while the direct producers (workers) receive just a subsistence wage. The argument is that capitalists "deserve" the profits they receive because of the risk and cost involved in establishing production. This is a pretty easy argument to knock down from a socialist perspective, because profit-making is based on the exploitation of the working class, central to which are these production relations based on property rights. In the same way, the extension of property rights to cover "intellectual" property is constructed as an attempt to protect the owners of an "idea" from the ill-effects of their idea being copied, as this would result in copiers unfairly gaining from the idea's application, and the owner missing out on profitable opportunity.

A fundamental characteristic of socialism is the communal possession and control of the means of production (or the inputs in the productive process). Compared to our creative and intellectual energies as inputs in the productive process, we can have a relatively

unemotional attachment to the physical (tangible) inputs like raw materials, and can more easily envisage the communal possession and control of these means of production. Intellectual property on the other hand presents the more difficult problem of collectively sharing the benefits of intellectual and creative effort. There is no objective difference between sharing an idea and sharing a piece of machinery, but subjectively it is very different, as creativity is constructed as highly individual and personal. Or, like in the recent Napster case, artistic integrity is at stake. Rap artist Eminem summed it up: "If I'm putting my heart and all my time into my music, I expect to get rewarded for that. And if you can afford to have a computer, you can afford to pay \$16 for my... CD."

What makes this framework harder to argue is the seemingly natural link between individualised intellectual property rights and the appearance of creativity as attributable to an individual or group of individuals. Intellectual property, it is argued, identifies the creator of an idea: it grants the status of author or inventor on the owner. If there was no copyright law, for example, there would be nothing to stop anyone from publishing another author's work as their own. This response confuses the two potential functions of intellectual property law.

Firstly, it can be the basis for identification of authorship or creatorship, but acknowledging the source of a work does not alter the ability to use or commercially apply it. Secondly, it allocates ownership of intellectual or creative effort, protecting the owner from the detrimental effects to profitability caused by duplication and distribution. This second function is what profitability depends upon, and is the primary function of intellectual property for capitalists. The protection of the reputation of artists, inventors and researchers as "creative geniuses" is not at risk by abolishing intellectual property – it is merely one of its side effects. There are other ways of ensuring the acknowledgment of sources, for example, the conventional courtesy of citation of references in the writing process.

Intellectual property and the class struggle

Intellectual property presents a difficult problem for traditional class relations, in that it represents a potential "blurring" of the distinction between capital and labour – a concept adopted to reflect this is "intellectual capital". There are ways in which intellectual property is said to protect the interests of the creator against the economies of scale that give big business an advantage over the individual.

For example, it provides the lone inventor with some protection against the competitiveness of industry. If the inventor isn't in a position to produce a new product on a mass scale, they can sell the patent rights to a company who can. Alternatively it can provide market protection for a set term to aid in the setting up of production. Along a similar line is the argument that an individual's ownership of intellectual property rights can work to their advantage in negotiating their employment contracts.

The reality is though, that intellectual property provides far more protection to firms than to individuals, and this is increasingly the case as corporations surpass individuals as the owners of intellectual property. In Great Britain, for example, 15 percent of all patent applications were from corporations in 1913, but by 1955 this percentage was 68 percent. The pattern was similar in the USA, and these tendencies have continued since then. The "lone inventor" is becoming increasingly obscure in the statistical data, but this doesn't mean that corporations themselves are making important breakthroughs.

Rather, it reflects the dependency of researcher/scientists/artists on companies to bring their work to the marketplace, as they don't have the means required to do so on their own, even with intellectual property protection. Instead, they are forced to seek employment in large companies who are willing to fund the research and development of an idea. Secondly, it reflects usual practice regarding the ownership of an employee's discovery or idea. It is quite standard for an employer to claim at least part, if not full,

ownership to all intellectual property generated by the work of one of their employees during the time of employment. A serious consequence of this is that not only do companies end up getting most of the profits of innovation, they also control what research and development is carried out, based entirely on an industry's capacity to generate further profits. This means that important yet less profitable areas of research are abandoned in favour of profitable areas: for example, designing the next Pokemon toy, or finding a cure for HIV.

Another point made by both proponents and critics of intellectual property is that it stimulates inventive activity by making it more profitable to invest in, which results in an improved standard of living over time. This is highly misleading. Although there have been absolute advances in material conditions, the reality is that the capitalist class gets far richer far more quickly than any incremental increases in the wages of workers. The increased material standard of living supports the ideology that we are all working for a shared objective.

This pacifies the working class, despite the growing gap between rich and poor, and obscures the more fundamental aspect of the class struggle. More importantly than any relatively minor increase in the ability to consume that innovation has provided the working class with is the fact that it has also allowed for increasing levels of profit to be appropriated from the working class. Intellectual property exists as an institution that serves capital rather than labour, as well as providing the technical means to drastically improve productivity without a corresponding increase in the productive real wage. ■

Penny Hayes

Sources: The patent application data comes from Parker, J.E.S. *The Economics of Innovation: the National and Multinational Enterprise in Technological Change*. London: Longman, 1974. P. 27.

IN THE LATEST INSTALMENT OF RED WORDS , A REGULAR FEATURE OFFERING ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS ALONG WITH CLASSIC SOCIALIST POEMS AND EXCERPTS, WE REPRINT POETRY BY LINTON KWESI JOHNSON AND NELLIE WONG, WHILE DOUGAL MCNEILL GETS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH EMINEM. WE ENCOURAGE ALL READERS TO SEND THEIR OWN CONTRIBUTIONS TO RED WORDS.

RED WORDS

Misunderstood rebel or stupid dickhead? _Eminem

Rap star Eminem - dubbed "controversial" by the Philistines of the mainstream media - was nominated for a Grammy Award for his album Marshall Mathers LP. This album, 75 minutes of bile that starts with Eminem threatening to rape and murder his mother and end with a hysterical gay-bashing rant, has been the subject of much discussion and controversy. Is



Eminem a symbol of youthful rebellion or is he just - as I suspect - another homophobic dickhead?

For starters, anyone who claims Eminem is a rebel or an anti-authority figure is just plain wrong. You know about him thanks to a very slick media campaign. MTV in America pushed his music relentlessly, playing his videos an average of three

times a day in an attempt to stir up both his image and attention in him.

Eminem only turned to his latest "rebel" image after his 1997 debut album described as "filled with tracks about love, unity and trying to get on in spite of hard times"

- flopped miserably. That's when he and his producer decided to restyle him into the "Marilyn Manson of rap" and Dr Dre - one of the premier producers in the "gangsta" scene - recognised the money making potential of having a white protege to spread rap to a wider audience. The record companies loved it! Their hype machine got into gear, and now the rest is history.

Eminem himself has never pretended to have any integrity - he was prepared to do a duet with Elton John for god's sake! But what is worrying is the way that liberal music critics have

decided to praise his lyrics, apologising for the excesses as "ironic" or "cartoonish" or "the product of a troubled past".

In an album where he raps about killing his wife, arranging the gang rape of his sister, spews misogyny and raves against gay people, Eminem is being anything but ironic. He's spewing filth.

That's why the protests outside the Grammy awards by gay and women's groups were so important. There's no point in banning music, like some right wing critics want. What we need to do is to expose this sham "rebelliousness" for the media industry scam it is. It's an indictment on this society where youth are so alienated by the hypocrisy of official morality that they can be drawn to a pop star whose anti-authority pose is a cover for vile anti-woman and anti-gay ideas.

We need to recognise and build real rebellion. Because Eminem raps in the same language as the people we all need to rebel against: and that is the language of cold, hard cash.

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

"Youths of Hope"

I

common hurt that burns blood,
even in air, sharing shock
(souls leaking light, bones like
burnt out embers - not hard like stones),
has fused tight our flaming flesh.

bodies black shaping time,
heads tight height light,
eyes fury flaming hate;
we young lions, youths of hope;
we smoke weeds of wrath,
twist rhythms of riot,
explosive words,
from blazing blood
rooting up the stagnant air.

we young lions roaring rage
seeking age of time and rebellion
have come to know in our short while,
the razor route of wretchedness,
the alphabet of terror:

terror tearing our blood
to pieces of smoke;
terror piercing hollow fear;
terror, the brother of death;
death: the beginning and the end...
the end...the end...the end...

The ultimate danger destroying all
who hasten to fortune on our backs;
the ultimate threat to the pot-bellied
millionaires -
riding high above the electric shock;

the beginning of the end is what we are.

II

they came with fire blazing
death deep within our midst
desiring our destruction.
we were water extinguishing their fire;
rubber bullets bounced back to source,
batons were twisted round tyrants' necks -
bruised only frightened flies,
cs gas was smoke of incense
sweet scent lacking sting.

terror could not move us;
oppression cannot move us,
the volcanic strength of the earth
cannot move us: we are grounded.
we are black blood screaming flesh
seeking peace for our dead.
we young lions, youths of hope.

Linton Kwesi Johnson is probably best known to *Socialist Review's* readers through his reggae and dub recordings, and through his record label (LKJ). But Johnson is an accomplished poet as well as a musician. He was active in both the Black Panthers and the Race Today Collective in Britain in the 1970s, and is one of the most prolific revolutionary and political artists of the last 50 years. We reprint one of his poems here.

Nellie Wong

Nellie Wong is a Trotskyist feminist who became politically active in the United States. She was involved in immigrant workers' struggles, and in the socialist and feminist movements. Her tribute-poem "Women Workers" is reprinted here.

Women workers started the Russian Revolution. Women workers sparked the shipyard strikes in Poland.

Women workers and housewives marched by the thousands to protest the inhumane, antiwoman repression in Iran.

Women workers protested the sexist antiwoman conditions in the textile factories in Korea.

Women militants fought the Kisaeng tourism/prostitution in Korea.

Women workers formed a 100-year marriage resistance in Kwangtung, China.

Women fighters, young and old, fought in liberation struggles in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Cuba, El Salvador, South Africa, Lebanon.

Women workers are fighting to end nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

RED WORDS



just what are your politics anyway?

The more observant among you may have noticed that this magazine's politics aren't quite the same as the mainstream media's. So just where do we stand? Below are some of the basic political ideas behind our magazine.

Socialism Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

Workers Power' Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power – a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils.

China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

Revolution Not Reformism Despite the claims of Labour, Alliance and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

Internationalism Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

Liberation From Oppression We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Māori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class.

We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence.

All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

Tino Rangatiratanga We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga.

Māori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Māori.

The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Māori elite while doing little for working class Māori.

Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

Revolutionary Organisation To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day to day activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

check out our website – for meeting details, online articles, cool links & more, point your web browser at:

www.isonz.homestead.com

Seattle, Prague,
Melbourne – the
birth of a new
movement? In the
next issue of
Socialist Review, out
in June.



Contributing to this issue of *Socialist Review* were
**Tim Bowron, Andrew Cooper,
Simon Edmunds, Penny Hayes,
Chol-Ho Kim, Dougal McNeill,
Evan Poata-Smith,
Rae Sinclair & Andrew Tait**

Cartoons by Hinze

Contact details

All email enquiries

isonz@hotmail.com

Dunedin

Meetings every Thursday at 7.30pm at the Clubs & Societies Building, 84 Albany St. For more info contact Brian 472-7473

Invercargill

Phone Rosa (03) 218-2226

Christchurch

Phone Evan (03) 377-0630

Wellington

Phone Andrew (04) 476-0030

Australia

Contact Socialist Alternative at socialist2000@hotmail.com or write to P O Box 4202, Richmond East, Vic. 3121 for more details.

Write to us!



We welcome all contributions.

Please let us know about upcoming protests, meetings, conferences and other activities so we can advertise them and let others know too.

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Socialist^{\$2} Review

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